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ABSTRACT

While the benefits of arts involvement are increasingly clear, policies and practices consistent with this recognition are not proceeding apace. Nearly half of the schools in the United States have no full-time arts teachers, and emphases on standards and standardized testing have eliminated the arts in many urban schools. This case study of a multi-year, after-school program in urban public schools explores challenges and tensions that emerged during the program's implementation. Focusing on understanding the place and purpose of an arts program in a specific community, researchers employed a grounded theory approach and used multiple data-gathering methods, ranging from observations and interviews to surveys. They found that in serving hundreds of students, employing dozens of staff, and aiming to meet several complex goals, this arts program faced technical challenges that undermined its effectiveness. The arts program also suffered from unaddressed conflicts regarding norms and values. Artists attempted to provide students opportunities for creative exploration, while school staff emphasized control, order, and academic goals. The paper discusses these tensions and the ways they undermined the arts program. (Contains 43 references.) (Author/SM)

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Wide Awake to the World:
The Arts and Urban Schools – Conflicts and Contributions of an After-school Program

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Thanks are due to Milbrey Mclaughlin and Shirley Brice Heath for their valuable insights, and to the artists, teachers, and students who graciously gave us access to their classrooms.

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Abstract

While the benefits of arts involvement are increasingly clear, policies and practices consistent with this recognition are not proceeding apace. Nearly half of the schools in the United States have no full-time arts teachers and emphases on "standards" and standardized testing have eliminated the arts in many urban schools.

This case study of a multi-year after-school arts program in urban public schools explores challenges and tensions that emerged during the program's implementation. Focusing on understanding the place and purpose of an arts program in a specific community, we employed a grounded theory approach and used multiple data-gathering methods, ranging from observations and interviews to surveys.

We found that in serving hundreds of students, employing dozens of staff, and aiming to meet several complex goals this arts program faced technical challenges that undermined its effectiveness. The arts program also suffered from unaddressed conflicts regarding norms and values. Artists attempted to provide students opportunities for creative exploration, while school staff emphasized control, order, and academic goals. We discuss these tensions and the ways they undermined the arts program.

Wide Awake to the World:

The Arts and Urban Schools - Conflicts and Contributions

of an After-school Program

I connect the arts to...becoming

wide-awake to the world.

Maxine Greene, 1995: 4

It is 3:30 when the small classroom fills with children of ages from seven to twelve, and soon everything buzzes with the energy of constant body motion. They quickly peel off dark blue and white uniforms, and throw on bright t-shirts and stretchy pants. When David finally shuts the door and starts class there are 18 dance students—all black, nearly all girls. The three boys maneuver to the front and wiggle for attention whenever David looks their way.

David[1], the dance teacher, is about 30--tall, black, dreadlocked and gentle. He says, "These my babies. I was just like them, I come from the same place they come from," and mentions that he grew up in "the projects" in Atlanta. Ms. Lockwood, the teacher working with David, is white, loud and stern, but not punitive.

David moves non-stop and works up to a dripping sweat. The group sails through an hour of stretching and shoulder-popping, leg raises and sit-ups. Periodically, the boys slip into dance moves they are more familiar with. They angle to be in front, or first, or loudest. David keeps them all in view, breaking his routine to squeeze a shoulder or reshape a pose. Ms. Lockwood watches, and scolds, "Why you always looking around? David's up front, and your eyes should be, too." And for the most part, that's where eyes stay focused until the group coasts to a halt (Observation, March 6, 1997).

[1] All program participant, school, and program names used in this paper are pseudonyms.

Activities for Youth

Over the course of the past decade, practitioners, policymakers, and scholars alike have emphasized the ways athletic, artistic, and academic extracurricular activities can provide safe, supportive, and developmentally valuable contexts for young people--particularly in urban environments (see, for example, Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1992; Pittman & Zeldin, 1995; Dept. of Education report, 1998). These extracurricular activities, like the urban after-school art class described above, occur in the company of peers and mentoring adults. They provide time and space for structured access to activities involving sports, homework help, community service, and the arts. Research on the subject finds that participants benefit from access to a safe and structured environment, from opportunities to pursue interests and develop competencies, and from opportunities to forge supportive relationships with adults. These opportunities support their integration into adult society, their avoidance of high risk activities,[2] positive identity development, civic involvement in later life, and educational attainment (Steinberg, 1986; Otto, 1976; Larson, 1994; McLaughlin, et al, 1994; Spady, 1970; Blyth, D.A. & Leffert, N. 1995; Villarruel, F.A., & Lerner, R.M. 1994; Honig, M., Kahne, J., McLaughlin, M.W. (Forthcoming).

The Benefits of Arts Programs

There is also an emerging body of research indicating that involvement in arts-based activities, in particular, is broadly beneficial for youth (see, for example, Heath & Soep, 1998; Heath & Roach, 1998; Soep, 1996; Paley, 1995; Darby & Catteral, 1994). One facet of a decade-long study of youth-based organizations conducted by Shirley Brice Heath and Milbrey McLaughlin for example, focused on arts-based programs, and found a number of

[2] "High-risk" activities such as those reported by the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1992), include accident, abuse, and criminal involvement, and dropping out of school. "Risk" is a complex issue, however: Heath and Roach (1998) note that a characteristic of successful arts-based youth organizations is "providing safe environments for risk" associated with arts involvement (5).

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benefits associated with arts-related programs[3]. Perhaps the most important of these is the ability of arts programs to retain older youth (through high school), a notable fact because as youth age their involvement with organized activities declines. Youth involved in arts programs also report feeling more satisfied and competent than their peers. Because high-quality programs for maturing youth are rare, the possibility of such satisfying and beneficial participation is limited (Heath & Roach, 1998).

The positive outcomes of arts-related involvement may reflect the way the arts value and nurture knowledges and skills that are often ignored in traditional schooling: intuitive, critical, culturally specific, entrepreneurial, cooperative, kinesthetic, transformative (Heath & Roach, 1998; Soep, 1996; Paley, 1995; Darby & Catteral, 1994). Artistic expression allows young people several ways to display knowledges and skills, from verbal explanation, to group role-play, to visual and audio presentation (Darby & Catteral, 1994; Eisner, 1991a). These forms of expression tap different "intelligences," giving young people a variety of ways to excel, and allowing their instructors to note many forms of excellence, creating customized performance and assessment possibilities not available in most traditionally structured classrooms (Paley, 1995; Gardner, 1993). The arts involve youth in long-term, often collaborative, processes of production, letting them experience a range of activities over time to develop a variety of skills--from planning and managing, to strategizing and evaluating (Heath & Roach, 1998). For example, Heath and Roach (1998) highlight youth-based organizations which successfully incorporate the arts into their programming. One of these employs young (ages 7 – 23) artists to produce community murals. To date, the authors report, the program has hired more than 750 young people, giving them experiences with "researching, designing, planning, and rendering hundreds of public murals" (p. 9).

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[3] Comparisons between young people involved with arts-based and non arts-based youth organizations were possible because a selection of youth from Heath and McLaughlin's study completed the National Educational Longitudinal Study (NELS), which was one of eight forms of data collected by their research team.

Youth involved in arts programs also achieve in other areas: They appear more likely to be significantly involved in community service activities, more likely to want to continue formal education past high school, and more likely to win awards for academic achievement and school attendance than other youth (Heath & Roach, 1998).

The relationship between the arts and academic achievement, however, is not clear. Some studies have identified a connection (Fiske, 1999; Heath & Roach, 1998; Chapman, 1998a; Catteral, 1998b; Anderson, 1998; Darby & Catterall, 1994). For example, Heath and Roach (1998), describe a link between academic achievement and the arts, through the arts-related development of skills that "creep" into other aspects of students' lives (15).

Other scholars dispute claims of a link between the arts and academic achievement.[4] Elliot Eisner notes that studies have not clearly indicated such a connection and warns that:

> We do the arts no service when we try to make their case by touting their contributions to other fields. When such contributions become priorities the arts become handmaidens to ends that are not distinctively artistic and in the process undermine the value of art's unique contributions to the education of the young" (1998b: 15).

While few would argue that the arts may support students' academic performance indirectly—for example, through leading to an increase in characteristics including "motivation, persistence, critical analysis, and planning" (Heath & Soep, 1998: 12), we heed Eisner's caution. As schools increasingly feel the push to institute "standards" and standardized achievement measures, the arts may be seen useful primarily as they contribute to those ends. A desire to establish or legitimize art on those terms may also lead advocates of the arts to make overly large claims. For example, the recent report, "Champions of Change: The Impact of the Arts on Learning" (Fiske, 1999) goes to great lengths to document the ways arts programs support academic achievement. And both stances--art as savior or art as

[4] See especially the debate between Elliot Eisner and James Catteral, on the relationship of the arts to academic success in the January and July (1998) issues of Art Education.

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handmaiden–miss the point that Eisner makes: that the case for the arts should be made on primarily artistic grounds.

The Challenge for Policy and Practice

While the overall benefits of high quality after school activities and for the arts in particular are clear, policies and practices consistent with this recognition are not proceeding apace. Moreover, while we know that the quality of arts programs and other youth development initiatives varies substantially (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1992; Halpern, 1991; Kahne and McLaughlin, 1998), we know little about the challenge of providing such opportunities on a large scale, or about ways to support their quality.

In an effort to better understand these challenges, we examine a multi-year effort by a network of schools to implement an after school arts initiative. Specifically, we look at the planning and implementation of the arts initiative's programs: the goals, assumptions, and experiences of its various participants, and the conflicts that emerged during the course of the initiative.

The program takes place in a Chicago community which is 96% African-American, and impoverished (over 48% of residents live below the poverty line (United States Census, 1990). The district's schools perform poorly by any academic standard—-half of the schools are currently on probation because fewer than 15% of their students read at the national average.

The after-school arts initiative began in 1996. Several other elementary schools and the other high school in this neighborhood chose not to join the network. Ten schools—nine elementary and one high school—from this urban neighborhood had formed a network in an effort to foster reform and improvement. The initiative was promoted by the network director and was supported by the foundation that helped fund the network. In the first year, the project aimed to reach 750 students in ten schools. By the second year the project goal was

scaled back, aiming to reach 650 students in eight schools. In the first and second years, the program received funding from the foundation with some matching funds from the school district's central office. Entering the third year, the program received additional funding from a national foundation.

Methods and Data

Over the last three years we have been studying this network of schools and associated youth organizations. Guided by the interpretive research goals of understanding the "immediate and local meanings of actions" and their comparative significance (Erickson, 1985: 119; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994), our team of researchers made frequent (often weekly) site visits to conduct observations and interviews. In an effort to examine the overall context for youth and educators in network schools and the influence of varied factors, we have as of this writing observed 60 classroom sessions, interviewed more than 30 teachers, and conducted twelve interviews of principals. In addition, we have observed the monthly meetings of the network principals and sub-committee meetings. Informal conversations and unstructured interviews with school staff and students also occurred on an on-going basis. Observation notes have been written up and interviews transcribed (see XXX for a description of the broader study).

Our interest in the arts program stemmed from our desire to explore the challenges and potential associated with connecting schools and the community in the delivery of youth development initiatives. We asked: How will schools handle the complexities of implementing the program and of partnering with community artists? Also, how will artists and teachers negotiate the process of partnering to create meaningful arts experiences for youth?

Over the past two years we have observed 30 after-school art classes. We conducted 22 formal interviews with program staff, students, and artists. We also observed ten arts initiative planning/training meetings and two concluding performances as well as

network meetings where the arts initiative was discussed. Field notes were recorded for all observations and informal conversations. Additionally, we collected documents relating to the arts program, ranging from newsletters to student evaluations.

In the After-school Arts Program case study, we focused on understanding the place and purpose of the program in this particular community, the complexities surrounding its implementation, and its significance for all participants. In this paper we provide quotes and vignettes to give readers a picture of the program that is "naturalistically grounded in...lived experience" (Denzin, 1994: 509). At the end of each year, summaries of our findings and interpretations have been shared with the practitioners involved in the study to provide them with feedback and to initiate conversation about our interpretations. The responses of program participants help shape our understandings of the data and are reflected in our conclusions. The synergistic relationship between data and dialogue informs the narratives we present here.

The Program: A Rich Vision

During its first two years, the after-school arts initiative hired 24 working artists fluent in a range of media: creative writing, sculpture, painting and drawing, dance, and video. Many of these artists had prior teaching experience (a priority stressed by the project director and the principals), but none were "trained" as teachers. Each school was assigned three artists skilled in different media, offering courses targeting different age groups. Schools selected from among art forms, for example, stone sculpture, video and theater arts were all available for 6th - 8th graders—a school could request one of these. Typically creative writing and visual arts were the choices offered for 3rd – 5th grade classes, while dance classes were often (though not always) offered for the youngest group--1st and 2nd graders. Each art class had anywhere from five to twenty-five students who had chosen to participate, usually from among several after-school possibilities offered by schools (such as clubs and sports

activities). In the first year, artists worked at the schools two days a week; in the second year the initiative added a day, increasing the artists' in-school days to three. Art classes met after school, usually from 3:30 – 5:30, and often (but not always) in classrooms.

A parent and a teacher assisted each artist; both were paid by the foundation (parents at a lower rate than teachers' wages). The parent was to serve as a coordinator and a bridge to the school's home community, helping to publicize each season's final artistic production, to which the school body, families, and other visitors were invited. Foundation staff also hoped that exposure to the alternative teaching and youth development methods employed by artists would lead teachers to expand the approaches they use in their classrooms. The teacher was to help the artist integrate the school's curriculum into the art classes and was also to share creative material and methods tips with her/his fellow teachers.

The only high school in the network participated in the initiative through the High School Mentors Program. Each artist in the after-school program was paired with a high school student. In the first year these students—-referred to the program by school staff and faculty, on the basis of their perceived leadership potential--were paid a minimum wage to participate in weekly "leadership skills" workshops. In the second year the paid workshops shifted to a "jobs and career skills" focus, and special education youth were recruited. Both years the youth "graduated" to teaching along-side the artists and acting as mentors to the elementary-level students. In turn, the artists mentored the high school students, coaching them through the teaching process and increasing their exposure to art and arts-related careers. An explicit goal of these programs was to build bridges between more and less experienced participants, increasing awareness of life-path opportunities.

The high school and elementary school components of the program share many features. Each aims to encourage young people in their appreciation of and facility with artistic media; each attempts to direct youth to safe, satisfying, and enriching out-of-school activities; each provides youth with opportunities to develop positive relationships with role

models. These programs also aim to strengthen community and cultural connections. For example, they provide salaries for participating parents and high school students. Finally, the director of the Network, a former school teacher, hoped that involvement in the arts might boost students' self-esteem, and as a result, increase their academic achievement.

Beginning in the second year, an emphasis was placed on hiring artists from, or representative of the community. As an African American artist, the coordinator, Dahabo LeBaron, had been able to tap the city's communities of color to attract artists for the program. But recognizing that creative knowledge is also indigenous to communities, she expressed a desire to create a "cultural map" for the program--a map that would describe the "existing cultural resources" of the community. Developed with the assistance of community members, this map would affirm the importance, and deepen appreciation of residents' knowledge. With these goals in mind, three quarters of the artists hired for the second year were people of color, and one artist was a community resident. During the third year increasing community participation remained a goal--two local artists were hired, and the number of people of color increased.

The coordinator emphasized that the program could have other benefits for children, families, and communities:

> There's one school where there's one particular family that's homeless, but the kids are coming to school every day. Every day. [T]hose kids were sleeping in a car with their parents until maybe a week ago. And now they're in a shelter. But the mother comes to class; she stands there beaming with pride because she's watching her daughter dance across the stage. That's why we're in [this community](LeBaron, November 24, 1997).

She went on to describe how art might help children living in violence and poverty by giving them means to describe their experiences and envision other possibilities, such as "drawing the world [they] want to live in" (LeBaron, November 24, 1997).

Many Goals, Untested Assumptions

Those promoting the arts program recognized its substantial potential. They had designed a program that could serve several hundred elementary school students, while gaining support from and building on the capacities of teachers, parents, and high school students. In addition, they had secured several hundred thousand dollars from a local foundation, from the Annenberg Foundation, and from the district office to support the agenda. Finally, they were able to hire a talented and deeply committed African-American artist with a background as a teacher and with strong ties to the arts community. In many respects, this was a best case scenario. As such, it provided a valuable opportunity to examine the challenges associated with advancing this agenda.

A Model Program

In many ways, and in many cases, the numerous goals of the after-school arts initiative were satisfied. We observed engaging teachers, supportive school staffs, and happy, receptive students.

> Ms. Velez keeps her group of 5th and 6th graders focused and busy. The dance class takes place in a spacious classroom, and her direction is clear. She dances with the students, modeling steps, sequences, and style for them. The entire group splits into two upon invisible command. Then, facing each other, they move through a quickly paced and lively hip hop style dance. After a set of tough moves, Ms. Velez says, "That was better. You must give me--BOOM!" Her chest pops out and her back arches, pretzel-like, for emphasis. Student eyes open as they take in the ferocious move and soon they are all "popping" for each other. The teacher is part of the team, dancing non-stop. All the students are wearing knee-pads--gear that indicates the seriousness of their work.

After a while the line breaks, and then there is no line, just children moving in space. The principal peeks into the room and watches a set, beaming as the kids work. As she leaves, she comments, "It's so exciting!"

By 3:30 they've been dancing for 45 minutes. One little girl sits down on the floor, looking winded. Ms. Velez says, "Five more, and then we'll get a drink of water." Then, "Five and six and seven and left, then right," and keeps them moving. She urges them past the promised five more, saying, "Let's take it from the top, and then we'll get a drink" (Observation, May 13, 1998).

This class, and others observed, epitomizes the potential of high quality after school programs: Close involvement with an admirable, capable adult; challenging "real" and valuable work toward a production (or product) of high quality; a safe environment; support and monitoring and positive and purposeful interactions with peers (see, for example, Heath & Roach, 1998, Pittman & Zeldin, 1995). These positive qualities did not go unnoticed by the students: When our research team interviewed and surveyed youth they often commented on the benefits they attributed to their involvement.

For example, a student from this dance class described her teacher, Ms. Velez, as "my idol" (May 12, 1998). She spoke about her outside involvement in a professional dance company production, an experience that Ms. Velez facilitated. This culminated in a performance at the Chicago Cultural Center, at which, as the student said proudly, "I danced with her [Ms. Velez]!" While this occurrence was unique, all of Ms. Velez's students participated in a year-end dance production for parents and staff. In addition to being an exemplary dance teacher, Ms. Velez was gifted at finding ways to merge arts and academics, another foundation goal. She encouraged her students to keep journals and often started dance sessions by having students read their poetry aloud. In this case the program was clearly successful at blending academics with the art experience, at deepening students' awareness of the art production process and art-related careers, and at creating opportunities for young

people to engage in rigorous creative work, resulting in praise-worthy productions.

The program also appeared to provide a meaningful addition to the standard, often extremely traditional, school curriculum. Most of the schools in the network have emphasized "the basics" in their attempts to raise test scores, often using packaged test preparatory, "teacher-proof" scripted teaching methods. Reflecting this intensely narrowed focus, the arts have been cut from the curriculum of many Network schools, in a way similar to national trends[5]. In one Network school, students from kindergarten through eighth grade participated in scripted call and response style "Direct Instruction"(DI) reading and math lessons for the majority of their day--from 9:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M. The DI lessons sometimes took place in full-group gatherings; other classes, like this kindergarten group, had small-group DI lessons:

> The teacher, Ms. Ruffins, calls the names of a small group of students. She is sitting in a chair at the front of the room, holding the script she will follow for the lesson. The six uniformed kindergartners leave their writing practice sheets reluctantly, but perk up as they sit down together. Squirming in their seats, they respond to the teacher's sing-songy cues. "Get reaady! What's the letter?" She gives a sharp finger snap to elicit the group response. Kids call back, "A!" The teacher again, "Louder!" Finger snap. Students get louder on command, "A!" "Get reaady! What's this letter?" And on and on. They continue through the alphabet, gaining volume and speed. One little boy fidgets and looks away from the teacher, who recalls his attention with finger snaps and direct comment, "All eyes on me!" When the students perform well, Ms. Ruffins responds with scripted praise: "Good job!" or "Good talking!" At

[5] See, for example, the 1993 New York Times article by Susan Chira detailing the national disassembling of public school art programs in many geographic regions, including urban centers such as Los Angeles and New York. Tight budgets and competing priorities are often cited as the reasons for the cuts. This article also notes that the "amount of classroom time devoted to the arts...declined since 1962," and nearly half of the schools in the United States have no full-time arts teachers, according to data gathered by the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana and the National Center for Education Statistics (A-19). In an example of this, in the third year of our study the high school in this network cut all arts from their curriculum, citing pressure to raise low test scores as the reason. A reading

the end of the exercise Ms. Ruffins slumps back in her seat for a minute before calling the names of the next group (Observation, October 20, 1996).

This kindergarten class experiences a full day of scripted DI math and reading lessons, and then, as the teacher described, "From 2:00 to 2:20 I try to cover social studies and science" (Teacher interview, 1996). This schedule leaves little opportunity for creative expression, and no time for the kind of free-ranging critical discovery process that real engagement with art could initiate. In fact, the behavioral psychologist developers of DI methods view learning as essentially the same as training--a point of view that precludes many opportunities for innovation (Duffrin, 1996).

In these highly regimented school settings, children make ample use of their unscripted moments. They are bursting with energetically creative responses to life on the playgrounds and in hallways. During recess and after school uniformed children of all ages run, play double-dutch, and gather in small groups to listen to each other sing the ever-changing lyrics-of-the-moment. For many, free time becomes a chance to "free-style" (spontaneously "rapping") allowing a child to put a personal stamp on the moment, an opportunity rarely sanctioned in school. In contrast to the DI that constitutes the standard school fare, the after-school arts classes were among the very few structured and supervised creative moments in these children's school days.

The high school students also appreciated the after-school arts classes. In particular, students mentioned satisfying experiences that they had while working with the younger children in the After-school Arts Program:

> One of my students, she was really mad that day and she didn't want to dance, and then...since I was a Mentor[6], I got up there and I was dancing, you know, and I kept

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course replaced art.

[6] The high school students were called "Mentors" but that word implies something more substantive than the roles performed by these youth. While their elementary age charges clearly appreciated the "big kids," the high school students were in most cases not skilled in the arts and not trained in these skills before beginning to work. Thus, they acted primarily

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> on dancing and I kept on encouraging her, I told her...'Come on, you can come and dance'. So I was doing it, and I was hoping she would do it, and she finally came around and d[id] it (Clay, May 29, 1997).

Other interviews indicated that both elementary and high school aged youth valued the safety of after-school environments. They appreciated the relationships they formed with adults during those activities, important aspects of school-day extension programs that have been well described (see for example Csikszentmihalyi, 1984; Project Co-Arts 1996, 1993).

Finally, a survey of youth from schools in the network that asked students to rate school day and after-school experiences in terms of the supports and opportunities they received, found that students who participated in the arts program reported receiving more personal support and opportunities for development during the arts program than they reported receiving during the school day. They also reported receiving more personal support and opportunities for development than similar youth that participated in other structured after school activities. For example, youth engaged in arts activities were more likely to report that they trusted those they worked with, felt safe, and were respected than youth who participated in other after-school programs. Similarly, those taking part in arts programming were more likely to report that there were adults they would go to for advice and support and that adults monitored what was happening in their lives than youth taking part in other after-school activities (See XXX, et al., under review, for details).

Implementationally Challenged

Unfortunately, while many of our observations and interviews demonstrate both the accomplishments and the potential of this initiative, we also saw clear indications that the program's potential was often not realized. As one After-school Arts Program artist said, "The idea is great...but it hasn't quite worked out." At crucial points, the programs frustrated

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as assistants to the artists. They helped clean up, for example.

and stymied their participants for reasons that were, on the surface, simple and technical, albeit dauntingly numerous. Some of these problems were technical—-relating to program logistics. Others resulted from conflicting priorities.

Logistics

The logistical challenges of implementing these complex programs were significant. Together, the programs aimed to reach over 650 elementary school children. They were taught by 24 artists and as many assisting teachers. They involved numerous parents, and 21 high school students. The high school students, artists, assisting teachers, and parent coordinators all needed time-sheets, W-4 forms, and related paper-work. Buses were required to take the high school students to-and-from each of the eight elementary schools. Permission forms needed to be gathered from all the student participants, allowing for pay, the longer day, and the transportation. Large quantities of art materials--from video tapes to paintbrushes, from carving stones to writing tablets needed to be ordered and delivered to each school. Once there, they had to be safely stored until use. Class spaces needed to be secured in often already crowded schools. Finally, each program arranged training sessions and site meetings, to be held prior to the start date, and periodically during the busy semesters. With all these "threads," perhaps it was predictable that some snarling occurred. On the other hand, if the multiple benefits of these organizationally complex programs are desired, then learning to handle that complexity is imperative.

An After-school Arts Program artist described her experience this way, pinpointing many of the technical issues that plagued the program:

> First I didn't have a room at all–they just set us in the hall. And I didn't have the group of kids I was supposed to have, which was...the 6th to 8th graders. I met with some of the older kids on the first day, but they didn't come back. Cheerleading practice started and the older girls were interested in that, and the [only] boy was in

> football. I ended up with much younger kids than I was supposed to have. What would happen was, I would have a small group of kids that showed up before the dinner break, and then teachers started rounding up kids who left other programs, like the Lighthouse program, and bringing them to me after the dinner. Every day, different kids came. Sometimes no kids showed up--I'd get to the school and they'd tell me, 'It's canceled today, there's a game.' When that happened sometimes I'd watch the game until the kids were done. There'd be about forty minutes left for our art class, and we'd spend half of that cleaning up. I moved four times the first semester. First I was in a 2nd grade classroom, with all these miniature desks. Because I was teaching visual arts, I requested a room that we could get a little messy, with one or two big tables in it. And instead, we had a bunch of tiny desks! Then they moved us to the hallway, which did have a long table we could use. But not only were we in the hall, so was a cheerleading group, and the dance class. It was really noisy. I had to shout, and the kids still couldn't hear me and when I complained about the situation, they moved me to the science room. We were only in that room a few times because the science teacher thought we were too messy. They moved us back to the hallway (Hazel, April 20, 1998).

This artist went on to describe other draining experiences: constantly shifting storage spaces for art materials; a "teacher facilitator" who regularly arrived late and sometimes slept through class; a High School Mentor who started the program late and without prior notice, and then "only showed up maybe once every two weeks"; "site meetings" with the Program coordinator that this artist and the two other artists at her school weren't fore-warned about. These meetings were badly needed but only allotted thirty minutes--too short a time to list, much less deal with all these issues.

Some administrators and teachers also complained that artists contributed to the problems by arriving late or unprepared, and in one case an artist was described as

consistently leaving early while turning in time-sheets that claimed full pay. On these occasions the teacher led the art class.

Scheduling

Many artists had complaints similar to those mentioned above. Scheduling conflicts were among the most commonly noted. The disruption of an afternoon "dinner" or "snack" break was a problem reported by several artists. For this meal, students left the two hour art class near mid-session, and were then absent for a 15-20 minute period before returning to class. During most of our observations, this break absorbed nearly a third of the art instructional time. Artists also mentioned "competing" with schools' other after-school activities for students. Art classes were scheduled at the same time as popular after-school activities, including sports, Girl Scouts, and cheer-leading. Conversely, several students mentioned their default choice of arts, after being locked-out of first-choice activities. For instance, one girl said that she wanted to join her school's after-school golf class, which only had four other students, but couldn't because "They only let boys in" (Observation, April 28, 1997).

Finally, because schools often offered after-school activities that needed adult supervision, teachers were often over-extended, and reluctant to participate in the after-school arts classes. Where there were no teachers available to assist artists, these jobs were offered to other school staff, for example, classroom aides.

Space and Storage Issues

In addition to scheduling snafus, many artists described space and storage problems. Some artists were never assigned regular rooms for their art classes, and others spoke of their frustration at being assigned spaces that came with warnings to "keep it clean." One artist

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said:

> I'm of the understanding that [these children] haven't had much opportunity to work with paint. They are totally beside themselves in a way. You're dealing with this intensity--'I want to touch it, I want to do that,' and you go, 'Oh, no! Everyone will get a chance!' I mean, it's really hard when it's this sort of new stuff. Ideally, of course, you want this art room, a huge space, a place where things can be dirty, you know. Except here [at this school] it's like you can get it from the janitor saying, 'Why did this happen?' or the teacher facilitator wanted to make sure things are really clean, so there's this--it sometimes gets a little bit heightened. [It would be] ideal to have a permanent art room. Right now, the room I'm in is also the nurses' room...it's an office. [W]hen the kids usually go down there, it's for other reasons. [I]t's frustrating (Landau, February 26, 1998).

Other artists were also assigned locations that were not well-equipped for the needs of the class--for example a dance instructor was assigned a space with a concrete floor, without mats for her students to use during warm-ups. These "oversights" and contradictory messages (Use the space, but not too much) indicated that some school administrations were less than committed to the art classes, or perhaps had very different ideas about the goal of the classes. While artists were eager to introduce their students to new materials and techniques, in spaces which would allow them to explore the media, teachers and school administrators often seemed as eager for the art classes to simply house the students.

Conflicting Priorities and Purposes

While challenges associated with implementation clearly account for some of the difficulties encountered, this interpretation strikes us as incomplete. Repeatedly, during observations and interviews we saw significant signs that many principals and teachers were only marginally committed to the initiative and that this lack of commitment at least as much as

the technical complexity of the enterprise, led to inadequate implementation which undermined programmatic impact.

Rather than emphasizing only the technical/logistical challenges, we believe it makes sense to examine the ways artists' roles and priorities (norms associated with schooling) conflicted with those of many teachers and principals. The conflict, we believe, occurred on two levels. First, while many artists hoped to provide students with authentic opportunities to engage the arts and develop artistically, teachers and principals emphasized the value of safe and enjoyable experiences. Second, providing students with authentic opportunities to engage the arts and develop artistically conflicted with some cherished behavioral norms for teachers and students--qualities like order, cleanliness, and "coloring inside the lines." While some teachers working with artists were able, even eager, to facilitate authentic arts experiences, others disengaged from the program. In other words, schools emphasized nurturing safe and comfortable children, and safe and comfortable art.

Authentic engagement with the arts requires opportunities to freely experiment with form, media, content, and perception. As one artist said, "I think it has to be a bit chaotic...if you're making things" (Landau, February 26, 1997). And Heath and Roach (1998) note that successful arts-based youth organizations are effective because they create high risk and high stakes environments in which youth are expected to perform at high levels and are also safe to explore. In particular, by demanding an engagement with the self, the arts offer young people a chance to express their unique insights and experiences (Heath & Soep, 1998; Heath & Roach, 1998; Paley, 1995; Darby & Catterall, 1994). However, teachers wanted to remain in control, and suppressed attempts by artists to create "creatively chaotic" environments. Ultimately the arts program often functioned like a drop-off center.

In contrast to artists' priorities, most principals and teachers emphasized more generic goals. They wanted students to be in safe and structured environments. School staff is well aware that many youth face difficult and risky environments in their homes and community

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and they consistently express a desire to keep students safe and at school for as many hours as possible. For similar reasons, teachers and principals saw primary value in the meal they provided during after school activities, and downplayed the disruptive effect of such interruptions on the arts sessions. While artists also noted the importance of the meal, they described their desire to solve both problems--the hunger of the children, and the need for an uninterrupted class session.

Teachers and principals we spoke with also believed it was important to have fun after school. To many, the dedication and sustained commitment required for artistic development was not a priority. One principal said:

> We tell these children what to do all day–after school they need to be able to make some choices. From 7:45 to 3:00 someone's always pushing them, but...arts, this is their time (Rivers, March 6, 1997).

Even to the extent that teachers and principals valued artistic endeavors as ends in their own right, they frequently emphasized a conception of art as pretty or decorative rather than as expressive of individuals' "personal signature[s]" (Eisner, 1991b). Unfortunately, the desire to beautify may lead to a controlled art process rather than an authentic arts experience. The result may be safe work made to display in public spaces--the institutional equivalent of "sofa paintings." Commenting on the murals decorating one school, an artist said:

> I'm at Morgan Elementary, and [the principal] has done a lot of murals throughout there. I don't know exactly how those came about. Some of them look like there might have been student involvement and other ones look like, uh, you would hire a group of artists to come and do things (Landau, February 26, 1998).

In fact, the murals at this school, and "hall art" at others in the community are often colorful but predictable, featuring school goals expressed through slogans ("Try hard and you'll succeed"), rather than evidence of student's perceptions.

While both perspectives—art as decoration or as personal expression—are reasonable,

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they are not always compatible. In particular, it is possible to realize the goals of many school staff without creating a context in which authentic engagement with art or the practice of critical insight and articulation by students can occur. The lack of adequate space, the inconsistent participation of students, and the scheduling of a meal in the middle of the two hour session still permitted fun and safe experiences, but significantly constrained meaningful arts education. Complicating matters still further, pursuing authentic artistic goals created conflicts with traditional norms for teacher and student behaviors and this led to passive and active resistance[7].

At a basic level, students who authentically engage the arts frequently make a mess. Here an artist offers the means to artistic exploration while the teacher facilitator attempts to control the process:

> A skinny boy runs into the art room singing "I'm going to art!" Another small boy dashes in saying, "Party over here!" They take off their coats and start covering tables and then themselves with plastic bags. The class is Visual Arts, the students number about a dozen, all in grades 3 - 6.
>
> The artist teaching this class, Beth, passes out small objects--plastic animals, shoe soles, cloth flowers, wooden printing blocks. Every table has a couple of trays filled with paint--fuchsias, glowing blues, greens and purples. Pretty soon small fingers are also brightly colored.
>
> The teacher who works with Beth arrives. Beth describes the project, which is to dip objects in paint and press them on sheets of paper, to leave the painted

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[7]

> [T]he funding was a nightmare, just a nightmare. Even though...we had met with the [school] board all summer and all that information was in place, by the time we got back to the principals who had signed off on the program, some of them said, 'Wait a minute, we didn't know what we were signing.' (LeBaron, November 11, 1997).

Principals expressed their disregard for art-related goals by ignoring some problems and creating others. For example, they narrowly "signed off on" funding for the initiative, causing a late start date and then a ripple effect of related late dates (for ordering supplies,

"footprint" of the object. A student is carefully rolling paint on his paper with a rolling pin. The whole sheet is smoothly covered with a rich layer of cobalt blue. He uses one finger to carve out the shape of a car.

The teacher says loudly, "Don't nobody get paint on this floor!" Paint is getting on the floor and Beth says under her breath, "They can't really do this without some dripping." The teacher walks around scolding and handing out pieces of paper towel (March 18, 1997).

On a more subtle, but no less significant level, authentically engaging the arts can lead to conflicts with norms of rationality and obedience. For example, an artist described a teacher facilitator who routinely offered normative "advice" to art students, ranging from comments like "Faces aren't blue!" to "Why do you paint people looking so mad?—You should paint something positive" (Hazel, April 20, 1998). However, nurturing the ability to dream and create the as-yet-unknown is a necessary component of experience with the arts (see for example Greene, 1991; Morales, 1990).

Just as authentically engaging the arts leads students to act in ways that may conflict with school norms, it also can place teachers in this position. In art classes, teachers are not the experts and, if they fully participate they may act in ways that are enormously different than they behave in heavily structured and traditional classroom settings. Some teachers we observed clearly appreciated this opportunity:

Ms. Lockwood dances during the entire class session with a line of the littlest girls: Fortyish and overweight, she huffs and puffs, but keeps them moving. Some of the kids slack off about 15 minutes into the class, and Ms. Lockwood shouts, "If I'm 105 years year old and I can do it, y'all can too!" One of the little girls says, "You ain't that old." Ms. Lockwood snaps back, "Haven't you ever heard of hair dye, girlfriend?" and rolls her eyes (March 6, 1997).

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scheduling orientations, and so on).

Other teachers chose not to participate:

> [T]he Teacher Facilitator they assigned me wasn't a teacher, she was an aide or something. And she didn't seem to want to be there. She fell asleep in class. It wasn't clear what her job was. She was always reprimanding me about getting the kids down to their snack on time. The other [Teacher Facilitator], for the dance teacher, she was really nice, but she just disappeared every day. That class was huge, over twenty kids...and the [Teacher Facilitator] blew it off every day (Hazel, April 20, 1998).[8]

Some teachers participated only marginally, arriving late, busying themselves with paper-work, sleeping during the session, or focusing their attention only on discipline:

> The school counselor assists Mr. Romolo, the visual arts instructor. She has been working at a desk near the back of the room since the beginning of class, and rarely speaks to, or even looks at, the art group. When the High School Mentor arrives, a couple of little boys perk up and greet him. He's tall and good-looking, and obviously well-liked by the younger students. When he crosses the room to hang his jacket a flock of boys follows him. The counselor raises her head to shout, "Sit down!" and then continues with her paper work (April 28, 1997).

Teachers, on the other hand, described artists as poor disciplinarians, expressed frustration about the sometimes loud and active art sessions, and complained that artists wasted materials by not sufficiently directing their use.

The arts may create the possibility for conflict, but they also have the potential to empower students and enrich their lives. In particular, the arts highlight forms of accomplishment often ignored in schools that focus heavily on standardized test scores. They also provide students with opportunities for free expression, an implicit challenge to often

[8] In this school classroom aides, rather than classroom teachers, were hired to assist the

heavily controlled school environments and to the social values (and systems) that schools reinforce. For example, while art calls for tolerance of chaos and "outside-the-lines" expression, schools emphasize a deference to scheduled time and show a preference for scripted answers. In the resistance of many teachers to full participation in these art classes, we recognize a parallel resistance to the challenging implications of art.

Focusing the Arts Program on Academic Goals

Network Principals, responding to the intense local and increasing national focus on raising standardized test scores, consistently expressed more interest in and support for Network initiatives that emphasized academic achievement (such as a new reading program), than in the After-school Arts Program. In some elementary schools, only students who were performing well in school were allowed to participate.

The desire to garner more support for the program from the central administration, the foundation, and the principals, prompted the director to re-focus the program in the second year. In the earliest written descriptions of these programs the primary focus was on developing students' knowledge of and skills in a range of artistic media "across time and cultures" (Program document, 1996). By the second year the emphasis shifted to "achieving through the arts" and artists were encouraged to and often did make links between their projects and the schools' curricula.

Unfortunately, understandable concern for academic performance led to a search for much more direct connections. The program's coordinator said:

> I would like to see [the program] work much more strongly...with the curriculum goals of the schools...When they deal with dance, if they talk about time and grouping, you know, divide yourselves in groups of five...I want them to constantly think in terms of math" (Interview, November 24, 1997).

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artists.

Clearly, there are some valuable ways to connect the arts to literature, social studies, science, and other topics (see for example Anderson, 1998; Catteral, 1998a; Kaagan, 1998), but such connections are not always easy or useful to make. Further, it may be costly to limit students' understanding of art's value to academic matters (Eisner, 1998a). Moreover, this stance may constrain efforts to tap the indirect and collateral ways arts education can support learning. For example Shirley Brice Heath and Elisabeth Soep (1998) assert that the arts intensify characteristics of effective learning environments, which include risk-taking[9], imaginative planning, and a focus on individual identity. All of these qualities seem important as components of authentic academic achievement. However, if one is only, or even mainly interested in the arts as a means of developing students' reading and math skills, funding the arts is probably a flawed investment strategy--after school reading and math programs would likely accomplish more.

Implications/conclusions

From what we have seen, after-school art programs have great potential--especially when the arts are relatively absent from the regular school curricula, as they are in many school districts. The arts nurture experiences yielding skills and understandings that enrich youths' lives. Schools provide a convenient and inexpensive location, they facilitate participation, and they open up the possibility of productive connections between those promoting both after-school and in-school learning and development. At the same time, as with all partnerships, there may be costs. The norms and priorities of many schools differ from many of those who run arts programs. Decisions regarding the desirability of particular locations depend on multiple factors. Our examination of one effort in a particular community highlights two sets of issues those considering arts programming should consider.

[9] For example, the arts push youth to take risks by thinking expansively and "stretch[ing] their imaginations"(13). Heath & Soep (1998) contrast this with the emphasis on obedience apparent in other youth activities (e.g. sports, community service).

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Claims of academic utility

Funders, promoters, and those who implement art programs should be guarded in their assertions about the academic benefits of art programs. There is no conclusive evidence that art programs raise standardized test scores, or other traditional measures of academic abilities. Moreover, the emphasis on academic measures can undermine students' opportunities to engage in authentic arts experiences. As Elliot Eisner points out "It is of no small interest that what constitutes success [in the studies that claim a connection between art and academics] is higher academic achievement scores...not accomplishment in the arts...[When] educators [focus on test scores] it's a way of saying, 'You're right, the arts are not really important in their own right. Their importance is located in their contributions to more important subjects'" (1998a: 8-9, 12).

Eisner goes on to note that justifying the inclusion of the arts in schools by asserting their utility in fostering everything from higher test scores to cultural understanding, "leave[s] the arts vulnerable to any other field or educational practice that claims it can achieve the same aims faster and better" (12). In other words, the best defense of the arts lies in reiterating the value of arts involvement as its own end.

Implementation - Capacities and commitments

In addition to the risk of assuming that arts programs promote academic achievement, it is risky to assume that implementation will be straightforward. Especially in contexts with strained resources, those hoping to implement high quality programs must overcome numerous technical challenges. Furthermore, given that educators must respond to multiple legitimate priorities and that the pursuit of certain goals may constrain others, developing shared commitments with respect to arts programming is fundamentally important. In particular, it appears that authentically engaging the arts can lead students to act in ways that

conflict with norms and values that characterize much educational practice. "To call for imaginative capacity is to work for the ability to see things as if they could be otherwise" (Greene, 1995: 19). And this kind of imaginative *seeing* can lead to *acting*. For some who work in schools, this stance is threatening. This conflict, however, may be healthy. If providing authentic artistic experiences is a goal, then space (we mean this in the literal sense of space within schools to work and in the metaphysical sense of space to think critically and openly) must be created for this kind of engagement, and the possibility of transformation.

Ultimately, the arts have enormous potential for youth both as a mechanism for supporting youth development and also because they are fundamentally important for expanding lives. As philosopher Maxine Greene says:

> I do not see how we can educate young persons if we do not enable them on some level to open spaces for themselves—spaces for communicating across boundaries, for choosing, for becoming different... That is one of the reasons I would argue for aware engagements with the arts for everyone, so that—in this democracy—human beings will be less likely to confine themselves to the main text... (1992: 2).

To be successful, those committed to authentic forms of arts education must respond to the technical challenges of implementing arts programs in urban schools and also attend to the normative conflicts inherent in their implementation. It seems clear that some of what we observed in this case study reflects the arts program's location—the problems and pressures of urban schools are complex and can make successful production in many areas difficult. Technical challenges can, with attention, be redressed, but solutions will be highly contextual.

We suspect however, that many seemingly technical challenges stem from a lack of motivation, which results from norm and value conflicts. Since artists' goals often differ from those of administrators and teachers, artists' priorities regarding implementation often go unaddressed. Norms and values differences may be tenacious and their discussion fractious, but this does not justify retreating from dialogue about the role art can play in young people's

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lives and the implications of this for educators. Avoidance of exchange about such crucial questions, questions which raise fundamental issues about the processes and purposes of schooling, weakens the fiber of democracy while constraining efforts to foster programmatic change and improvement.

Maxine Greene insists that full experiences with the arts lead to full experiences with life. And in the end, this is of undeniable importance for schools and children. Students must have opportunities to appraise their world, to imagine alternatives, and to articulate their discoveries with artistic flourish. Then, school halls can be lined with the dynamic record of student visions and expressions. Rather than acceding to non-threatening forms of art—decorative or sloganeering—we encourage art program facilitators and school administrators to acknowledge and honor the greater potential and purpose of art in young people's lives.

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